

NEW CASES OF ESPIONAGE WITH PEGASUS IN MEXICO MUST NOT GO UNPUNISHED

Yesterday, R3D: Red en Defensa de los Derechos Digitales, ARTICLE 19 Mexico and Central America, and SocialTIC, with the support of the Citizen Lab of the University of Toronto — and alongside the media outlets: *Animal Político*, *Aristegui Noticias* and *Proceso*— published the investigation “[Ejército Espía](#)” (The Spying Army) which reveals the use of Pegasus to illegally surveil journalists and human rights defenders in Mexico. New cases of surveillance occurred during the current government administration and the victims are: Raymundo Ramos, President of the Nuevo Laredo Human Rights Committee; Ricardo Raphael, journalist and writer; and a journalist from *Animal Político*.

The investigation concludes that:

1. After a rigorous forensic analysis carried out by Citizen Lab of the University of Toronto, there is conclusive evidence that at least two journalists and one human rights defender, whose work and investigations are related to human rights violations committed by the Mexican Armed Forces, were spied on with NSO Group’s Pegasus malware between 2019 and 2021, that is, during the current government.
2. The company *Comercializadora Antsua S.A. de C.V.*, which was previously [shown to be](#) part of the commercial network that sold Pegasus to various federal government agencies during the government of Enrique Peña Nieto, received authorization from NSO Group to represent it exclusively before the Ministry of National Defense between March 2018 and at least until December 2019.
3. The Ministry of National Defense hired a “remote information monitoring system” from *Comercializadora Antsua S.A. de C.V.* in April 2019.
4. The Ministry of National Defense concealed the existence of this contract from the Attorney General’s Office and the Federal Superior Audit Office, as well as from R3D through access to information requests.
5. The army, without having the power to intercept private communications of civilians, has carried out and continues to carry out interceptions of private communications illegally.
6. In Mexico, the Army spies. Multiple indications point to a high degree of probability that it



is behind the Pegasus attacks on journalists and human rights defenders documented in the report.

The report's findings contradict the President's multiple and repeated promises that his government would not hire spying systems or use them against journalists and human rights defenders.

This implies the possibility of two scenarios: the first is that the President lied to the people of Mexico. The second, that the armed forces are spying behind the President's back and disobeying the direct order of their Supreme Commander.

Both scenarios are a demonstration that promises and words are insufficient to prevent the continued use of intelligence systems without any democratic control and against the people of Mexico.

In Mexico, the armed forces continue to violate human rights, whether by order or disobedience, crimes that remain impune. In either case, it is clear that the thesis underlying the drive for militarization in Mexico is false.

The facts that this investigation reveals must not go unpunished. It is essential to clarify how many people have been spied on, which officials participated or had knowledge and how the information obtained has been used, including with whom it has been shared.

Investigating and opening the files of military, naval and civilian intelligence which have continuously abused their power, as the Ayotzinapa case has shown, is fundamental in order to begin a process of truth and justice for thousands of human rights violations -including illegal spying- committed in previous and current governments that remain unpunished.

We inform that today a complaint has been filed with the Attorney General's Office for the illegal interception of private communications. However, we note the lack of confidence that the Attorney General's Office will conduct the investigations with independence and professionalism.

This distrust is not gratuitous. It is justified in view of the experience of more than five years of investigation into the espionage perpetrated during the government of Enrique Peña Nieto

without full clarification to date, and in view of various examples of obstruction by the Attorney General and military, such as in the Ayotzinapa case.

For all of the above reasons, the journalists and human rights defenders affected, as well as the organizations that accompany them, state the following:

- We demand that the federal government guarantee the security and personal integrity of the people spied on with Pegasus and their families, as well as the people who have participated in the investigation of these events, and the organizations and media that carried out this investigation.
- We request that truth, justice and the absence of impunity be guaranteed through the establishment of an independent and international mechanism to investigate the illegal espionage committed by previous and current governments.
- We urge Congress to guarantee the non-repetition of illegal espionage through a legal and institutional reform agenda that verifiably prevents the abuse of the country's intelligence systems. This process must be accompanied by civil society, to ensure adherence to the highest human rights standards.
- We ask the Senate to suspend the process of approval of the constitutional extension of the presence of the armed forces in security tasks, especially until the reported cases of espionage are clarified.
- We invite all journalists, human rights defenders and members of civil society at risk who suspect they may have been subject to surveillance measures and wish to be part of the investigation into possible spying with Pegasus, to write to: contacto@ejercitoespia.mx to be contacted by the organizations carrying out this investigation.



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